

REMARKS

Claims 1-21 and 23-29 are pending in this application after entry of the Reply After Final filed on August 22, 2003. Claims 1, 9-11, 16, 18-19, and 27-29 are independent.

Applicants submit this Preliminary Amendment in order to clarify the status of the present application. On August 22, 2003, Applicants filed a Reply After Final, including amendments to the specification, claims, and figures. A two (2) month extension of time fee was also paid at that time. Upon contacting the Examiner on September 24, 2003, Applicants learned that the Reply After Final had not been received by the Examiner for review and had apparently been misplaced at the Patent Office. Applicants submit herewith a copy of the stamped postcard indicating receipt of the Reply After Final by the USPTO on August 22, 2003. Applicants respectfully request that the Reply After Final be entered.

Request for Interview

Applicants are filing concurrently herewith a Request for Personal Interview. It is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact Applicants' representative prior to taking any further action in this application to schedule an interview to discuss the outstanding rejections.

Conclusion

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully

requested to contact Catherine M. Voisinet (Reg. No. 52,327) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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By

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Attachment: Postcard receipt for August 22, 2003 filing